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# WILDLIFE SERVICES—OHIO

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## USDA Resolves Wildlife Conflicts in Ohio

Every day, residents, industries, organizations, and agencies call on Ohio Wildlife Services (WS) for expertise in protecting agriculture, property, natural resources, and human health and safety from damage or threats posed by wildlife. Managed by professional wildlife biologists, WS responds with effective, selective, and humane strategies to resolve wildlife conflicts.

Ohio is a diverse mix of urban and suburban settings, agricultural lands, and forested environments with more than 11 million residents. Croplands, pastures, and forested areas make up more than 80% of Ohio's landscape. WS biologists help Ohio's livestock and agricultural producers reduce losses from predators and birds, and protect humans, domestic pets, and livestock from rabies. In addition, WS protects air passengers and aircraft from dangerous wildlife/aircraft collisions at 30 Ohio airports and military installations. In fiscal year (FY) 2006, WS biologists assisted customers who reported wildlife damage in excess of $2,795,653.

**Top 5 Major Assistance Activities:**

- Protecting the public, domestic pets, and livestock from rabies
- Protecting public safety and aircraft operations from wildlife hazards at airports
- Protecting livestock from black vulture and coyote predation
- Protecting public safety and limiting property damage from Canada geese, gull, pigeon, starling, blackbird, and other wildlife damage
- Protecting aquaculture and natural resources from bird depredation

**Top 5 WS Research Projects of Interest to Ohio:**

- Defining and reducing wildlife hazards to aviation
- Managing predators to protect livestock and wildlife
- Controlling wildlife vectors of rabies, pseudorabies and brucellosis
- Reducing blackbird/starling damage to crops and feedlots
- Protecting municipal utility structures, residential property, and livestock from vulture damages utilizing new methods

## Applying Science & Expertise to Wildlife Challenges

WS offers information, advice, equipment, and materials that enable many people to resolve wildlife conflicts on their own. Often, this *technical assistance* can be provided over the phone. WS also provides on-site expertise, or *direct assistance*, to manage complex wildlife problems that cannot be safely resolved by others. To support this effort, WS conducts *scientific research* across the Nation to develop answers to new problems posed by wildlife and to ensure the program benefits from the latest science and technology. While WS conducts a wide range of operational and research activities, a few in-depth examples are provided to highlight WS' role.

**Protecting Health and Safety—**Raccoon rabies entered Ohio in 1996 in the northeast counties adjacent to Pennsylvania. By late 1997, Ohio reported 62 cases, which threatened public health and safety. In an effort to halt the westward spread of raccoon rabies across Ohio and into the Midwest, WS cooperated with other Federal and State agencies to create a vaccination immune barrier from Lake Erie to the Ohio River. As part of the program, oral rabies vaccine (ORV) baits are distributed throughout the target area.

In July 2004 a raccoon turned up positive 6.6 miles beyond the bait zone. USDA immediately started a large-scale trap, vaccinate, and release program, to aid creation of an immune racoon population in the air. An aerial distribution of oral vaccine followed. Enhanced surveillance, including tests of roadkill and nuisance animals, monitored the outbreak. Over the year 45 raccoons and one skunk were found to be positive for the raccoon rabies variant. WS has continued efforts to define the scope of the outbreak using enhanced surveillance. Ten raccoons were found to be positive for raccoon variant of rabies in 2006. Trapping to collect blood and tooth samples to test the efficacy of the bait drops will continue in 2007.

The contingency effort in Ohio is focused on creating a rabies immune raccoon population in target counties to prevent the westward spread of raccoon-strain rabies. Enhanced surveillance and vaccination of raccoons will decrease the chance of exposure to humans and domestic animals, as well as prevent the westward spread of this rabies variant. This outbreak is of great concern in Ohio, not only due to the high densities of raccoons, but because this occurrence is on

the western side of an existing ORV bait zone that has been maintained and considered successful in nearly eliminating the raccoon rabies variant from the state. WS efforts to stem the spread of raccoon rabies variant will continue in any emerging areas of concern, as well as the historically baited portion of the state in 2007.

**Protecting Air Travel—**Wildlife strikes with airplanes cost U.S. civil aviation more than $550 million annually and pose a hazard to flight crews and passengers. The majority of strikes are caused by birds. From 1990 to 2006, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) reported more than 2,866 wildlife strikes at Ohio airports. The FAA estimates, however, that reported wildlife strikes only account for approximately 20% of all strikes that occur.

WS is recognized internationally for its scientific expertise in reducing wildlife hazards to the aviation industry. WS' National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC) continually conducts research to understand the nature of wildlife hazards at airports and develop management tools to reduce these hazards.

Applying this scientific expertise, Ohio WS provided technical assistance to 30 civil and military airports in FY 2006. WS biologists and technicians provide on-site evaluations, comprehensive wildlife hazard assessments, wildlife hazard management plans, and airport expansion and design consultations to minimize wildlife presence. WS also trains airport personnel to reduce the risk of wildlife/aircraft collisions, and provides operational support to reduce wildlife hazards at airports. Two full-time wildlife biologists are stationed at two airports in Ohio to monitor and reduce wildlife hazards through habitat management, behavior modification, and other methods.

**Protecting Livestock from Predators—**Livestock are an important industry in Ohio. The National Agricultural Statistics Services (NASS) reported that Ohio was the largest sheep-producing State east of the Mississippi River and ranked eleventh in the United States in sheep and lamb production. NASS estimated the value of Ohio livestock losses due to predators at $164,000 in 2004 for sheep and $1,019,000 in 2005 for cattle. Unfortunately, these losses are felt most acutely by small farmers. In Ohio, 97% of all farms are smaller than 1,000 acres and 84% of farms have less than $100,000 in annual sales.

WS biologists in Ohio help to reduce livestock losses due to predation . WS recommends the use of integrated wildlife damage management, which combines multiple methods to thwart predators. Examples include night penning, improved husbandry practices, guard animals, nonlethal harassment techniques, and predator population reduction. WS offers educational seminars and workshops to help producers implement management techniques to minimize livestock losses on their own.

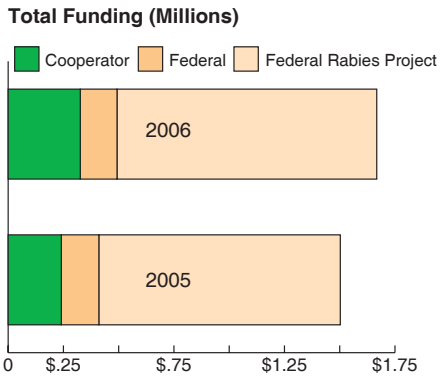
NWRC conducts an extensive program of research and methods development to prevent and reduce livestock predation by wildlife. Studies are underway to develop more effective and less injurious coyote capture systems, sound-activated aversive conditioning collars for coyotes, and improved electronic frightening devices. Coyote territorial behavior and population modeling studies are underway to support the development of reproduction suppression strategies for areas with high-predation rates.

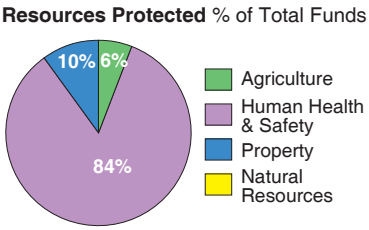
## Looking to the Future

Ohio has more than 240 miles of Lake Erie shoreline, and requests have increased for WS help to minimize gull damage. Published literature indicates that the Lake Erie herring gull nesting population is increasing by more than 11% annually, and the number of nesting ring-billed gulls in the Great Lakes increased four-fold between 1976 and 1990. The black vulture population grows annually along with the number of damage complaints. Local governments, residents, and producers, are continuing to report large numbers of European starling and other blackbird roosts in cities, crops and dairy facilities, causing significant public safety issues and crop damage. Ohio's double-crested cormorant populations are also on the rise, causing damage to the aquaculture industry and vegetative habitat used by State-listed threatened and endangered species.

## Ohio Wildlife Services Funding

In addition to receiving federally allocated funds, WS also receives money from cooperators who have a vested interest in the program: producers, private individuals, businesses, and other Federal, State, and local government agencies. In most cases, these cooperators need help to resolve wildlife damage problems or they play a role in wildlife damage management. Seventy-five percent of WS Ohio funds have been Congressionally directed to rabies protection.




**Major Cooperators**

- Ohio Cattleman's, Pork Producers, Sheep Improvement, & Poultry Breeder Assoc.
- Ohio County Commissioners Association
- Ohio Farm Bureau Federation
- Ohio Livestock Coalition
- Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center
- Ohio State University Extension
- Ohio Departments of Agriculture, Natural Resources, Health, and Transportation
- Southeastern Cooperative Wildlife Disease Study
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- U.S. Department of Defense
- Federal Aviation Administration

**NWRC Field Station in Ohio**
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The primary focus of research at the NWRC Sandusky, OH, field station concerns wildlife hazards to aircraft. The field station, established in 1968, located on a 6,000-acre, fenced facility operated by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) The restricted facility contains native grassland, reverted farmland, marsh, and woodland adjacent to intensively farmed land outside the fence. Located near major populations of gulls, cormorants, and other species of concern to aviation, considerable field research on problem birds can be done within 60 miles of the station.